

# Clergy Financial Well-Being Initiative

2022-2024 Priorities

The Clergy Financial Well-Being Initiative, in partnership with annual conferences, United Methodist foundations, and United Methodist agencies and entities, equips pastoral leaders with financial education and training, seminary scholarships rewarding ministry excellence, and resources for debt relief and refinancing.

## Addressing Current Clergy Economic Challenges

United Methodist clergy today face new challenges—from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, to ongoing economic volatility, to unrest within the Church. Clergy burnout is on the rise. The impacts on clergy of color are further exacerbated due to the existing burdens of systemic racism including bias, economic and social disparities, lower compensation, and high educational debt. Some face geographic isolation limiting access to healthcare and information about aid and relief.

The Clergy Financial Well-Being Initiative (Initiative), in partnership with Gammon Theological Seminary, has a renewed focus on underserved clergy of color most affected by these challenges. With the most recent Lilly Endowment Inc. funding, the Initiative will:



Prioritize the financial well-being of **clergy of color**, especially those impacted by the pandemic.



Address the **financial impact of systemic racism** on clergy within The United Methodist Church (UMC).



Promote **holistic well-being** that views financial well-being interrelated with physical, emotional, social and spiritual well-being.

[View the Initiative's video and case statement that outline the Initiative's vision, research and more.](#)

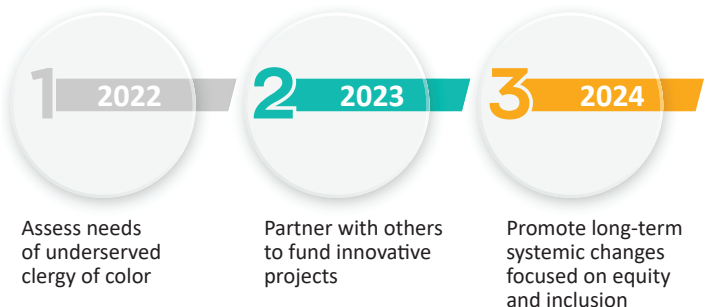


[Watch the video](#)



[Read the case statement](#)

### Our Three-Year Plan:



In the first year of this three-year focus, the Initiative is assessing the needs of underserved clergy of color. It will use the findings from this assessment to develop appropriate resources, strengthen networks and distribute funding. Examples of programs already funded include:

- **Black clergywomen's self-care and wellness program** to prevent burnout, including a financial well-being component.
- Expansion of existing **clergy emergency funding**, with increased support for clergy of color with COVID-19 financial impacts.
- **Wellness retreats for clergy of color** focused on renewal from pandemic-induced stress and retooling for a rapidly changing environment.

In 2023–2024, the Initiative will seek additional partners to fund innovative projects ranging from providing financial relief to designing efforts that seek systemic changes focused on equity and inclusion that increase access to financial well-being resources for clergy of color.

*(continued)*

## 2017-2021 Initiative Accomplishments Through Fruitful Collaboration

With initial funding from the Lilly Endowment Inc., the Clergy Financial Well-Being Initiative has directed and multiplied significant financial resources toward improving clergy financial well-being including:

- **\$4.4 million** in Excellence in Clergy Leadership Scholarship Partner contributions for 625 awards as of 2021.
- **More than \$500,000** educational project partner matching funds contributions.
- **\$1.2 million** designated to refinance clergy debt among several area foundations.
- The Initiative has engaged thousands of pastors and ministry leaders in educational ventures:
  - **More than 8,400** participants in diverse local and national continuing education experiences.
  - **More than 50** local, regional and national projects and events reaching clergy from all stages and sizes of ministries.
- **Significant in-kind contributions** from Wespeth, Discipleship Ministries, Gammon Theological Seminary, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, National Association of United Methodist Foundations, United Methodist Publishing House, and other project partners.

### Saving Grace: A Guide to Financial Well-Being



In 2020, Wespeth and Abingdon Press launched *Saving Grace*, a six-part small group curriculum aligned with Wesleyan values for clergy and congregations designed to improve personal financial well-being. This collaboration will continue to expand opportunities for clergy and congregations to use *Saving Grace*.



For more about *Saving Grace*, scan the QR code with your phone!

### Funds—Dollar for Dollar Match!

We have received a \$250,000 grant for this work and **we have an opportunity to receive an additional \$250,000**. The Lilly Endowment Inc. will match dollar for dollar up to \$250,000 raised by **September 30, 2023**, which would raise the total funds available for this important work to \$750,000.

The Initiative will continue these efforts with a focus on racial equity to ensure underserved clergy and communities in the UMC have access to resources leading to greater financial freedom and well-being. **Join us in this life-giving ministry!**

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*A collaborative project led by:*

Wespeth Benefits and Investments • The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry  
The National Association of United Methodist Foundations • Discipleship Ministries  
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